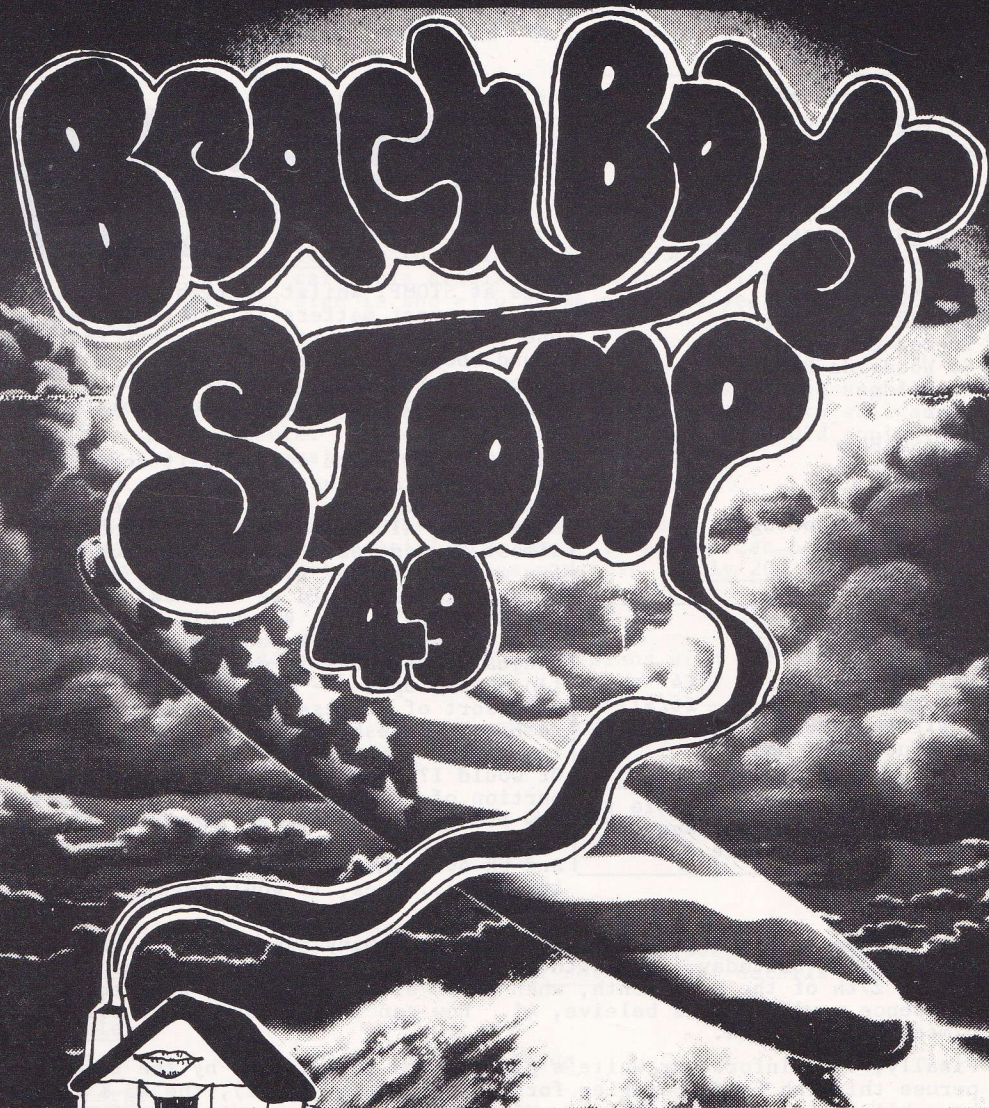


AN AMERICAN BAND



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June 1985

BEACH BOYS STOMP - June '85

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Here at STOMP, whilst we might be reasonably adept at most matters BB related, there's one thing we seem to forget every year round about this time. Simply it's this: "Happy birthday to us/Happy birthday to us/Happy birthday dear STOMP/Happy birthday to us"!

May 1977 saw Issue one, and it seems both so long ago and just yesterday. Eight years... almost as long as gaps between Beach Boys albums (sorry, cheap shot), and almost as long as I've been a Beach Boys fan myself. Prior to June 1975, Brian Wilson himself could've knocked on my door and I wouldn't have known him from Adam; then I read the Nick Kent NME articles (unjustly maligned in my view) and the floodgates opened - though if I'd known what sort of madness I was eventually going to become enmeshed in, I'd have run screaming in the general direction of Away! Or would I? For the memories that any portion of "Rhapsody In Blue" will always now bring flooding back (thanks BJ), for the wonderful friends I've made in the US and UK over the years and most of all, for the music... yes, it would have been worth all the hassle.

One birthday we couldn't forget if we tried; many happy returns to Brian for his 43rd birthday, June 20th. God bless. Also, many happies to Bruce on the 27th of the same month, when he is also 43 and not, as every reference would have us believe, 41. How can I be so sure? He told me himself, that's how.

Finally, to reinforce Mr White's plea in the last issue, by the time you peruse this ish (and apologies for taking up most of it), the 45 & LP will have hit the racks and hopefully Mike and I will have met some of you at the video premiere, May 31st, so please, send in your plaudits, brickbats, insights, threats, whatever concerning anything. I don't know about you, but I'm getting fed up with reading my stuff.....

AGD

Special thanks to Ronnie Fischer, Jonathan Morrish and Joanna Burns at CBS, and Stephen Moore, Jennifer Bossin and Jane Shire at Vestron Video for their help in the preparation of the reviewed material in this issue.

BEACH BOYS STOMP 7TH CONVENTION - HARROW LEISURE CENTRE

14th September 1985 - Doors open 11.00 am 12 noon to 6.00 pm

Tickets

Unlike 1984 we are not selling tickets in advance, but a ticket will be given at the door as a souvenir. Cost not yet known due to possible live entertainment, but expected to be either £3 or £4.

Entry

As with 1984 the door will not open until 11.00 am, so only those with table permits will be allowed entry prior to this. Please bring your latest copy of STOMP with you to avoid an entry charge to the centre building. There is a cafeteria available for early arrivals. All entrants will be asked to sign in and also as in previous years PLEASE WEAR A NAME BADGE.

Tables

This year tables are again available approximately 2'6" x 2'6" and are £10 each. On the day these will be £15 and any person wishing to sell anything must have a table. Those wishing to take tables should apply to me before the 15th August and please enclose an S.A.E.

Badges

We would like to offer again the now customary badge, but the last two years have caused large financial problems. If anyone can help with this could they please contact me as soon as possible. Only 200 will be made so be early.

Videos

Nothing is yet decided and we will announce plans with the next issue.

Raffle

The raffle will be much the same as usual and a list will be printed in the next issue.

Auction

At this stage we are not sure about an auction but if anyone has an item they think might be of use to us and can decide on a minimum bid, could they please let me know.

Location Map

The usual map will be published next issue, the centre is not difficult to find and is very easy to get to via public transport. The Centre phone number is 01 863 5611 but they will not have any details about the day.

Timetable

We will print a timetable in the next issue.

Don't Forget

Saturday 14th September, Harrow Leisure Centre, Christchurch Avenue, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 5BD. From 12 noon to 6.00 pm.

Roy Gudge, 42 Frensham Road, Lower Bourne, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 3NY.



THE BEACH BOYS

THE BEACH BOYS - CATALOGUE NO: CRB 26378

During the last five years the mere mention of an unreleased song or backing track or alternate version was the most we Beach Boys fans in the UK had to get excited about. At least fans in the US could go and see the group live, and "California Dreaming", "Chasin' The Sky" and "East Meets West" were released.

Now at last the real thing has arrived - a new Beach Boys album. Will the absurd faith most of us have in them be justified? What will it sound like with a new, outside producer? Will there be much Brian Wilson involvement? Will it be successful? Well all but the last question is now answered.

What interests me more than what I think about the LP is what all of you think about it. So I am really looking forward to lots of reviews and poll entries (list your favourite tracks in order 1 to 12*) and just general opinions. (*Including 'Male Ego')

All who enter the poll have the chance of winning a Vestron Video Press Kit which includes photos, sun visor, biogs etc. for "The Beach Boys - An American Band". Winners will be just picked out of the hat so everyone has an equal chance. Here are my thoughts on listening to the album.

SIDE ONE

1. "Getcha Back" (Mike Love, Terry Melcher) First single from the album. Fabulous falsetto (Brian?), Mike on lead and joined by Brian for the "If I leave her and you leave him" ending, no real chorus, the main hook being the falsetto, which reminds me of both a speeded up "Hushabye" and a slowed down Four Seasons "Alone".
2. "It's Getting Late" (Carl Wilson, Myrna Smith-Schilling, Robert White Johnson) Terrific backing vocals and a big full sound. Carl sings lead and the chorus sounds similar to "Of The Times" from the YOUNGBLOOD LP. An average song turned into a first class track by the excellence of the vocals. I like it a lot.
3. "Crack At Your Love" (Brian Wilson, Al Jardine, Eugene Landy) Again the vocal sound instantly impresses. Alan on lead, always good to hear him singing and I think perhaps Al should do more leads - Brian sings a catchy bridge "Lonely days, lonely nights". A real grower with possible single potential. Production, so far, sounds just fine to me.
4. "Maybe I Don't Know" (C Wilson, M Smith-Schilling, Steve Levine, Julian Lindsay) This sounds like a track aimed at American Rock Radio with heavy drumming and blistering guitar throughout. Lead vocal by Carl and again backing vocals make it very acceptable.
5. "She Believes In Love Again" (Bruce Johnston) What's this? Bryan Adams on lead vocal? No, it's the new gritty Bruce Johnston, a change in vocal style that works very well. The ever dependable Carl sings the chorus. Most melodic song on the first side and I think Bruce's best song since "Disney Girls". Best bet for cover versions.

SIDE TWO

6. "California Calling" (A Jardine, B Wilson) Stephen McParland suggested in the last issue of STOMP that the group should do one side of an album in the Sixties style. Well Stephen you will have to settle for just one track and this is it. Sounds a bit of a joke on first listen. But bung it on a tape mixed with other summer songs like "Do It Again", "California Girls", "Kona Coast" and "Surfin' USA" etc. and when the sun shines, wind the windows down and it sounds just great. Mike and Alan share lead vocal duties. Uptempo fun.

7. "Passing Friend" (George O'Dowd, Roy Hay) One can almost imagine Boy George singing this instead of Carl. Sounds very commercial and may be the song that's the hit. It could well be accepted by record buyers who wouldn't normally buy Beach Boys records. Longest track on the album.
8. "I'm So Lonely" (B Wilson, E Landy) Already half familiar from Brian's "Ear Say" appearance last year. Brian's only lead vocal. He's almost back to how he sounded in the early Seventies prior to 15 BIG ONES. Great sax intro and easily the catchiest song on the LP. Carl sings the middle eight. A favourite with many who've heard the album and it's hard not to sing along with it. The Everly Bros "When Will I Be Loved" springs to mind on the verse.
9. "Where I Belong" (C Wilson, R W Johnson) "Good Timin'" and "Goin' On" are the songs from LA (LIGHT ALBUM) and KEEPIN' THE SUMMER ALIVE that I always return to. "Where I Belong" will join them from THE BEACH BOYS. A nautical song and it's a theme that seems to inspire Carl (i.e. "Full Sail" and "The Trader") above the norm. Synth and piano intro lead to Carl singing solo before the group burst in on a chorus "No need to search no more exotic islands" that knocked me sideways. Alan also sings a terrific counter vocal during the refrain. A word of praise for Mike Love here. Mike's leads do not please everybody these days, but his bass backing vocals here and throughout are second to none. Everything gels to perfection on this track and credit must go to Steve Levine. In my opinion this is the best thing Carl's done since the above mentioned "The Trader" and I love it, love it, love it. Hang on while I play it again.
10. "I Do Love You" (Stevie Wonder) A song that couldn't really be written by anyone else. The fact that Stevie wrote it will ensure the radio DJs will initially pick it out for airplay. Carl's lead is just great but I do find the chorus and tag just a little irritating. For me one of the lesser cuts.
11. "It's Just a Matter Of Time" (B Wilson, E Landy) Fifties doo-wop style featuring Mike and Brian very simple and very effective. Shrottest track on the album and a fitting closer.

June '85 and a new LP, new single with a non-LP 'B' side, a video biography all arriving at once. Much to enjoy. Good news also that the group are planning a 25th anniversary double album.

So buy the new album and get cracking on those reviews and poll entries.

MIKE

THE SINGLE

Getcha Back 2.59(M.Love-T.Melcher)/Male Ego 2.30(B.Wilson-M.Love-E.Landy)
Produced by Steve Levine.No.CRBA 6324 Pic Bag,Release Date 3rd June 1985.
The Beach Boys first single on their own since 'Come Go With Me' in 1981.
Main point of interest is the 'B'Side 'Male Ego' which is the first non L.P flip in the UK, since 'Celebrate the News' 16 years ago. It opens with some 'It's Like Heaven' style piano followed by a Mike Love lead on the first verse. Brian takes over and tries to out shout a very noisy drummer(or drum machine). A pity because the lyrics seem to be worth hearing. Best part is the Bridge 'Don't know why we love to chase those tasty ladies,Betcha boys we'll be doing it in our eighties'. Sounds like the same lecherous male as in the alternate version of 'Hey Little Tomboy'(of which 'Male Ego' is a distant cousin). The tag reminds me of the fade in 'Funky Pretty'(i.e. some will say why). 'Getcha Back' well covered elsewhere in this issue, manages to capture the 'classic Beach Boys sound'(Brian's falsetto) and sounds really strong when played on it's own as a single. Hopefully a Hit on both sides of the Atlantic.

MIKE



THE BEACH BOYS - AN ALBUM OF OUR TIME

A cassette is sitting on the table before me. It could contain anything on its few yards of ferrous oxide-coated plastic tape. A computer program for "Frogger". The telephone conversation between J.R. and Cliff Barnes. But it doesn't. It contains eleven songs by the Beach Boys, under the collective title of... THE BEACH BOYS. Yes, dear readers, that's the title we've been waiting for - and I'm pleased to report that the album contents are somewhat more imaginative than its name.

Bruce Johnston said of the LP, "Old time fans will be pleased" and in one respect he is right, namely the fact that it is busting at the seams with VOCALS. In other ways it is definitely not an "old style" Beach Boys record and nor should we expect it from the combined efforts of a group of middle-aged men and an almost up-to-the-minutes producer (who was probably not even at primary school when said men kicked off their career). Unfortunately it has to be said that where it is long on vocals it is a trifle short on melody inasmuch as after the first playing, the tune I carried in my head was "I'm So Lonely" - that because I'd already played it before in its unfinished state and even plonked it out on the piano a few times. Enough preamble, on with the cans, up with the volume, here goes.....

Getcha Back: Crash... crash... sounds like the "East Meets West" drummer bashing seven kinds of **** out of his kit... "Bow bow bow ooh" sings Mike like the old days... then, hey, that's Brian singing a falsetto line sounding like a cross between "Hushabye" and "Alone" and the whole group doing "Oooh wah ooh" - just like the old days! Wow, terrific! Then a verse in the same vein with a strong lead from Mr Love before the chorus comes in, or rather where a chorus should be. It's just Brian doing his great line again with people muttering "Getcha Back" somewhere in the next studio. Hmmm. Still great opening track, lots of enthusiasm, key change near the end, bags of vocals, relieved smiles all round.

It's Getting Late: A beautiful, wordless vocal intro heralds a quiet Carl lead with more solid ooh's and aah's from the lads followed by a good wallop chorus. Strong stuff but, again I'm looking for a melody which isn't really there. Somehow it doesn't matter too much but the fade arrives a mite too quickly for me.

Crack At Your Love: Holy cow - another wad of vocals, this time vaguely reminiscent of "Here Comes The Night" a la disco but definitely OK. Alan takes the wheel for this one with much gusto and simple chorus - what a great voice he's got. In contrast, Brian sings the little snippet of a bridge in somewhat softer tones ('s really nice, y'know?) then a weird thing - when Al sings the lines, "I'm gonna need a little help from above, what would you say now if I asked for a love?", at the end of each line he sounds just like..... Dennis.

Maybe I Don't Know: Heavy off-beat drums to a 6/8 beat and a tasty guitar lick introduce a powerful, slightly moody song with Carl singing lead. I've grown to like this one - turn it up loud and it'll send your speakers flying across the room.

She Believes In Love Again: Shock, horror! The unmistakeable voice of Bruce Johnston but he, too, has suffered the ravages of time and he now out-gruffs Brian. Still, that fact does not really detract from the song and with Carl taking over the chorus the result is a melodious offering, whilst among the background vocals I think I detect a female person (just like the old days?). Pity the track seems to come to a grinding halt just before the end of the fade. Nice song.

California Calling: Oh cripes, it's "Surfin' USA" - no it's not, but it's trying to be... oh, here's the organ from "California Girls" just wandered in, add a couple of Californeyeye's and references to surfing and car radios - yes it is contrived but good fun in its own way I guess.

Passing Friend: I have to say that this is the first track that, for me, does not seem to fit. Is it, I ask myself, because I know it was written by non group members Messrs O'Dowd and Hay? I don't know, I reply, but it does seem to drone on a bit and the lyrics don't really seem to suit the BB style. After the umpteenth repeat of the chorus I reckon it could certainly do with a minute or two shaved off without suffering too badly.

I'm So Lonely: Oh, look what they've done to the intro - they've sliced off that nice chunky electric keyboard we heard on the basic track and replaced it with a farty sax that sounds like Mike Love blowing his nose. Shame. Still, never mind Brian sounds great and the lyrics are different, so gone are those funny "really, really bleew"s. Hang on, what are the backing vocals saying in the bridge section - no, can't be. It's a simple song but for me it's worth ten Passing Friends - sorry, is my bias showing?

Where I Belong: Carl's dulcitol tones slide easily over fuzzy synth and a few sparse donks of percussion to create something special out of virtually nothing. Don't get me wrong - the song is fine (if a little too short) but there is hardly any instrumental track and the fullness of the sound relies mostly on those marvellous voices which weave in and out, sometimes gentle, sometimes strong with Mike's bass vocal as a solid anchor. All in all a jolly spiffing sound.

I Do Love You: Carl's powerful lead and pleasant group harmonies notwithstanding this, to me, remains a Stevie Wonder LP track. Sort of sophisticated and funkyish with a mystery guest singing the tag but doesn't tear up any trees, as they say.

It's Just A Matter Of Time: Lazy, laid back doo wop with Mike duetting with Brian (I think) against a backdrop of harmonica, pattering percussion, plunking banjo noises and a sea of vocals. Not a strong tune but it's compensated for by a good overall sound. A pity, though, that this was Brian's only other solo composition.

AGD (sawn-off hack of this parish) claims a certain amount of soul-searching before pronouncing this an OK record but I cannot understand why because, apart from the slight lack of actual toons one can whistle in quiet moments, this is very much an OK record. Mayhap the drummer is a touch too enthusiastic here and there but in the main the production and arrangement sounds fine to these product-starved ears. With decent and enthusiastic promotion the album should do well and will maybe pick up a few new fans along the way.

Already I want to flip over the cassette and play it again. Just like the old days.

CHRIS WHITE

STAYIN' ALIVE IN '85 (or HOW I LEARNED TO LOVE BRUCE JOHNSTON)

Unlike my last American jaunt (Autumn 1981), the Spring 1985 expedition was supposed to be more organised at the Los Angeles end of things, and indeed it was all cut and dried, right up to three weeks before leaving; I'd see Steve Desper, Jasper Dailey, Dave Leaf and Malcolm Leo for certain, maybe see the video-biog and, if one or two people in LA got moving, just maybe get to say hi to one of Wilson's crew, but to be honest, I wasn't holding my breath about the latter possibility.

Then came the call from a friend just back after several years in LA, and a list of phone numbers for sundry BB affiliates, ending with the home number of one Bruce Johnston...

For the next few days, my phone bill rose in quantum leaps and my schedule became both looser and potentially more exciting. Surviving a Heathrow computer failure, an overly concienious Boston customs officer and a late-night stroll in downtown LA, the phone lines from my hotel room were also soon aglow, as I tried to set up a schedule through a fog of travel weariness. The result of these and other calls are outlined below and will probably spill over into subsequent issues: I'd like to think they're of interest to both the casual fan and the die-hards. If not, then it's because of my methods of reportage, for whatever else my 5½ days in Los Angeles were, dull they were not. 8

CALIFORNIA DREAMING...

While the phone rang, I leaned back against the palm tree and half closed my eyes in deference to the glare from the ocean below and to my right. Even for Los Angeles, a March midday temperature of some 80 degrees was a mite unexpected; having left the snows of the UK some thirty-six hours previously, I wasn't complaining.

"Hi, is that Andrew?" The unmistakeably smooth tones of Bruce at the other end of the line redirected my attention. We'd spoken before I left for the US, and again earlier that day, but although I was now physically somewhat closer than before, nothing more than requests to "call me later" had been forthcoming... "Look, I'm not exactly sure what today's schedule is so I can't promise anything- but if you can get to the studio for quarter to two, we'll take it from there. Can you make it?" Suppressing a desire to tell him to stop asking daft questions, I replied in the affirmative, collected the studio address, said thanks, hung up and promptly bit the inside of my cheek to check I wasn't dreaming. The studio... no, best not even think of it.

It's a tribute to the Los Angeles RTD that at 1.45 exactly, I was standing outside Westlake Audio and informing the entry phone that Andrew from England was without: "Well come on in, Andrew from England". The door swung back, two steps in, and as my eyes adjusted to the relative darkness I discerned a wall covered in gold discs - including one for THRILLER - beneath which, sprawled over two chairs, phone in hand, reclined the form of Bruce Johnston, clad in white tennis shorts, socks, trainers, shirt and a light blue 1984 tour jacket. Still conducting his phone conversation, he shook my hand and motioned me to sit. Business concluded, he introduced himself again and ushered me into the lounge area between reception and the studio itself. "Steve, this is Andrew, he's a big wheel in the English fan club". Thus I was introduced to Steve Levine, and one glimpse of his expression was enough to convince me that, however cordial Bruce might be, at least one person in the studio was going to find my continued presence slightly less than welcome... assuming, that is, that my present was going to be continued. Of this I was still unsure.

For maybe five minutes we exchanged some very small talk concerning fans and fandom in general, the only fact of any import to emerge being that the album still had no title. Bruce then motioned me to follow him down a corridor, "but leave your bag here, we'll be back for it", (an observation that gave rise to small hopes). Emerging from the back door into the car lot, Bruce pointed out Alan's jeep before leading me to his own vehicle, a brand new four-wheel drive pickup of which he was justly proud. "We're gonna go see the sessions we did for the album sleeve, OK? Oh hey, I just gotta go see that!" "That" was a Chevy, circa 1957, condition immaculate and some six blocks away. We pulled up alongside and BJ complimented the owner on his possession, to the bemusement of the poor man who, although he obviously didn't know who Bruce was, could sense that this was a man of no little wealth. What he thought of me, heaven only knows.

As we cruised to the photographic studio, Bruce gently grilled me as to how I'd got a hold of his home phone number and my degree of involvement in the BB cosmos in general. "You know, I'm the only one who'd do this for you", he stated, absolutely mater-of-factly. Mike wouldn't, nor would Al. Carl would but no-one's cracked him yet!" All delivered in a tone completely devoid of boastfulness, causing me to think of him in a different light. The attitude wasn't "look at what I'm doing for you" but rather "OK, you've taken the time and trouble to come out here, and to find me out, so let's see what we can do for you."



At the studio, the proof shots were spread out and I was invited to make my choice (there were already several different sets of coloured stickers affixed to some of the frames, indicating someone else's preferences). The majority of the pictures were group shots, with a few individual studies and one of the groups with, as Bruce put it, "our girlfriends, wives and soon to be ex-wives." A grin rather disarmed the latter point, however... As all of my choices already sported at least two stickers, I concentrated on drinking in the newest photos that anyone was ever likely to see: Bruce noted the main object of my scrutiny and observed over my shoulder, "Brian should really smile more: he's in really great shape but, well..." indicating what would have been a superb frame marred by Mr Wilson pulling a typical "Brian-face". Looking over the rest of the shots, I could appreciate his concern. Luckily, there were enough useable frames, and some priceless Brian grins.

A half-hour or so's shuffling, comparing and discarding, and it was back to the car and to Westlake. "Are you hungry? There's this great sushi place just down the block; we can do the interview there if you like." So, for the next hour and a half it was eat, talk and eat some more, to the slightly surreal background of a tape of Tatsushiro Yamashita, a Japanese singer who contrived some amazingly faithful renditions of Beach Boys songs (among them "Guess I'm Dumb"!). The interview appears elsewhere in STOMP, and with hindsight I realise it could've been a damn sight better: such is life. On the way back to the studio (by the way, Bruce paid, declining my offer), I was treated to a brief Johnston family history, Bruce's father having built the block opposite the sushi house.

Back in the studio lounge, I'd barely sat down and begun talking to Gordon (Levine's engineer - Levine himself was apparently checking out studios for sale in the area) before the studio door opened and I was introduced to Alan, on his way out back to listen to his song on the jeep stereo, cassette in hand and determination writ large upon his brow. Once more Bruce motioned me to follow him, pulled back the studio door... and I found myself in the midst of more technology than I'd seen in some computer stockists. The 48 track board was recognisable enough, but the only other items I could place with any certainty were a keyboard in one corner and a Hofner Violin bass in another. The floor was a snake's nest of patchcords and various computerish keyboard type things populated almost every flat surface. Bruce pointed to a director's folding chair at the back of the room and as I sat, rewound the master reels (the 48 tracks being made up from two 24 tracks in synch) in order to blast me with "California Calling". To be honest, given the surroundings and circumstances, he could have played "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" and I'd have raved about it... but it was a great song, classic old Beach Boys with a bang up to date production. I soon learned that Al had been working on it for almost three days, being something of a perfectionist in the studio in stark contrast to his apparent stage behaviour. In fact, returned from the back lot, he was still concerned about the di-dits, and had to be (somewhat forcibly) informed that it was too late now. It was then that I realised the true extent of my good fortune: today, March 22, was the absolutely last day of mixing on the album. Next day was booked for mastering and the English contingent similarly booked for home. Almost perversely, I'd caught the tail-end of the album because of the problems with the initial mix, a subject I broached very carefully indeed, to be told that whilst it was true that the band had turned it down, it was at a meeting at which CBS and Levine also decided it wouldn't be a bad idea to go over it one more time: a more mutual decision than had appeared at the time.

During the next hour or so, I got to know "California Calling" pretty well as the final EQ and mixing were pinned down. My opinion was requested by both Alan and Bruce, the latter slightly tongue in cheek I rather suspected as he was evidently enjoying my reactions to the days events as they unfolded. But then he knew what was coming next.....

"Calling" finished, the final track requiring work was Bruce's own "She Believes In Love Again" before the album was assembled pre-mastering. The master reels were cued up and, as I was by now accustomed to a frequent traffic in and out of the control room, another opening of the door warranted but a glance; hence it took a few seconds before it hit me just who the tall ginger-haired guy with the beard was. It's just as well I was sitting down.

"Brian, this is Andrew". Bruce was still running the show, smiling at my thunderstruck expression. The Man gave me a slightly apprehensive up-and-down once-over, head cocked slightly back, before deciding I presented no threat, and extended a hand, inquiring "Hi, how's it goin'?" Those who know me well may doubt the next statement, but I was completely stuck for words; at length I managed an earth-shattering "OK, and it's good to meet you Brian." With a small grin, he subsided into the chair I'd just vacated, propped his feet up on the mixing desk and contemplated the hands he held folded in his lap. I leaned against a monitor and, trying not to make it too obvious, absorbed every particle of his appearance. Still trim in both figure, beard and hair, he was casually dressed in blue jeans, red t-shirt, terry socks (white), leather moccasins and a white tour jacket with the 1985 Presidential Inauguration logo in gold thread on the back. The manner, however, was extremely tense and tight, which would account for the presence of never less than two of Landy's retinue. The good doctor himself was apparently recuperating from an operation, but kept in touch with his charge every forty minutes or so via Pacific Bell.

I was just about back on the ground and concentrating once more on the development of Bruce's ballad when Carl stuck his head around the door with a general "Hey everybody, how's tricks?" Once more Bruce carried out his role of host, but wisely left it up to me to convince Carl that we'd not met before and that I wasn't Mike Grant. Accompanied by Gina, Carl was much as we've known him for so long, affable, a mite distracted and could stand to lose a few pounds.

For the next hour or so, "She Believes In Love Again" slowly took shape - with Levine back at the board once more and still pointedly ignoring me - whilst I drifted from Beach Boy to Beach Boy, helping Alan to carry his keyboard out into the studio, listening to Bruce improvise on a similar synth, sagely agreeing with Carl about the horn track and seeing Brian open up briefly during a three-way conversation with Gina and myself about chairs, meetings, holidays and teeth (honest, teeth...). It transpired that the Boys were playing a gig for IBM employees at the Bonaventure Hotel in a few hours, and a dilemma loomed. I guessed that with a minimum of leaning, I could probably ride Bruce's coattails to the show, and given Levine's attitude, it seemed a sensible shot... but it also became obvious that Brian wasn't going to do the gig and would probably stay in the studio. No contest: I decided to stick with The Man for as long as I could.

Carl had left by now and Alan was on the point of following when I recalled some of the contents of my bag, and dived back out into the lounge to gather up five copies of the Harmony Beach EP and something special for Bri. I handed Al his copy, explaining the concept, execution and so on (to his evident interest) and three more to Bruce, the two others being for Carl and Mike, whom I gathered hated attending mixing sessions, hence his absence. I'd seen Brian watching me play Santa Claus with one of his "huh?" expressions and accordingly approached him extremely carefully: with equal care I outlined the project, and was slightly unprepared for his response, which was to examine the disc and sleeve minutely, and to then enquire as to each of the artists pictured on the back slick. Curiosity satisfied, I was rewarded with a small



Brian Wilson with co-writer Eugene Landy. London June 1984

smile and a shy "thanks". Thus emboldened, I pushed on and presented him with a marvellous tapestry of the LOVE YOU cover worked by Mark Service (those at the '83 Convention will recall it): again the close scrutiny, followed this time by a broad smile and a heartfelt "this is very pretty, very pretty", and for the next few minutes it was toted around the control room for admiration by it's new owner before being carefully laid down on a safe surface with the EP.

Bruce's track had by now reached something of an impasse - or rather the engineer had. Consider the population in the control room - Brian, Alan, Bruce, two minders, an American engineer, Tom Hulett, Gina and yours truly - and it's hardly surprising that Gordon advanced his theory that maybe if he had the booth to himself, the track might progress a mite further. Wisdom prevailed and most folks headed for the outer lounge. Brian, however, announced to no-one in particular "I'm going into the studio to play some piano" and suited actions to words: not being a total prune, I was about half a pace behind him all the way down the passage. I had settled myself in a corner, Brian was poised at the keys...

...And I felt a tap on my shoulder as Chad, the chief minder, beckoned me out of the studio. Well, I thought, maybe it was asking a bit much after all. He spoke: "Now you're welcome to sit and listen to Brian, but, please, don't try to engage him in conversation, OK?" I rapidly assented and snuck back into the studio, hoping I hadn't missed anything.

My luck was holding, for Brian had been watching our conversation with a detached interest, and my return was greeted with another extended once-over. Feeling awesomely self-conscious, I nodded in what I hoped was an encouraging yet neutral manner; Brian nodded back and turned to the keys.

For the first five minutes or so, he ground out some fairly standard boogie variations, none longer than thirty seconds and all with a fluff or two for good measure. Then after a minute's pause, he began an infinitely more complex melody, delicate, with an almost fractured rhythm and gorgeous beyond belief. A good few minutes of sheer bliss later, it suddenly hit me what Brian was playing; his avowed all-time favourite piece of music, Gershwin's "Rhapsody In Blue". Playing it without music, playing it perfectly, with all his soul and musical prowess, head back, eyes closed, moving with the music and moving me almost to tears. Gershwin may have penned the melody, but this was a no-questions-asked Wilson arrangement, rich and full with an underlying thread of simultaneous humour and melancholy. My knowledge of the work isn't all that it could be, but by my reckoning, Brian played some 75% of it, and flawlessly, so much so that I barely noticed the transition from "Rhapsody" to "Cast Your Fate To The Wind", which was equally ideosyncratically arranged, equally well performed.

The music wound gently down, and I looked up to see a completely different Brian to the one I'd been sneaking glances at all afternoon: relaxed, confident and without a shred of nervousness or apprehension. He smiled across at me and confided "I always feel better when I've played that." Disregarding Chad's injunction against communication - after all, I'd not initiated the dialogue - I offered my opinion that he'd played "Rhapsody" beautifully. By now halfway to the door back to the control room, he turned and gave me a "little-boy-thoughtful" gaze: "Well... thank you, thank you very much." Again, I was hard on his heels heading back into the control room... and it seemed that as soon as he re-entered, the 'old' Brian, tense and wary, reasserted itself.

Alan had departed for the gig and Bruce, after a few final instructions to Levine, prepared to follow, so I picked my way over the cables and offered my thanks for all he'd one for me. "That's OK. I'll be back at eleven or so, so if you're still here I'll see you then. You stick around until they throw you out!" Levine elevated an eyebrow...

So now it was Brian, myself, Levine and Gordon in the booth, with a new shift of minders in attendance. Levine soon left in order to grab some food before preparing the final album assembly and Brian was also making moves to depart, gathering up sundry bits and bobs. Suddenly he became rather agitated, stalking about the room and poking in odd corners. "Where's my plaque?" Gordon, the minders and I exchanged puzzled looks. "Where's my plaque?" Where's the thing this guy (pointing at me) gave me?" Somehow, the LOVE YOU tapestry had been mislaid and it was evident that Brian wasn't going to leave until it was found; and might well dismantle the studio in the process. Praying that I wouldn't cop the blame if he got really uptight, I joined the others in combing the control room, with no luck - until someone thought of looking among the baggage - and there it was, safely tucked in Brian's shoulder bag by one of the earlier team of minders. Bri eased it out and, turning to me with an ear-to-ear grin, announced "this is very, very nice, isn't it? I'm going to hang it on my wall so's I can see it every day. Thank you very much, and give my love to all of the English fans when you get back. It's been a pleasure." A handshake, a final broad smile, a wave at the door and he was gone.

-oOo-

Thoughts of and about Brian: He's not as crazy as some would have us believe. Rather, he's acutely aware of his surroundings, of what's going on, and above all, of his own limitations and susceptibilities. It was almost as if he was wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with the legend, "I'm very fragile and I know it, so please bear with me." My feeling was that he didn't really want to be there, that the piano session was a release and that his apparent aloofness and distraction have been cultivated as a defence against any potentially dangerous situation - which for Brian has all too often been the simple act of drawing breath. Landy may have restored the body, but only Brian himself can really work on the inner man and - understandably - he's chosen to fight little more than a holding action for the last few years... but with the right stimulus - the music he loves - there can be happiness and fulfillment for Brian Wilson in the eighties.

-oOo-

Back in the control room, my own holding action was coming rapidly to a close, for Levine had returned and after a few minutes of desultory knob-twiddling, cast a meaningful glare in my direction and left, leaving me alone in the room. I'd a reasonable idea what was coming next and spent a frantic few minutes copying down the track listing taped to a monitor perched on top of the board, the running order having been knocked together by Levine, Alan, Bruce and Carl somewhat earlier during the session. The door opened, and in walked not Levine but Gordon, with a somewhat apologetic expression. He coughed once or twice, then: "It's nothing personal but, um, Steve would rather you weren't here: strange face in the booth and all that. You're welcome to stay out in reception but as for in here..." Deciding that to hold up progress on the first new album in five years wasn't in anyone's best interest, I assured Gordon that it was fine, I'd had more of a day than I could have hoped for in my wildest dreams and that I understood, and would be leaving as soon as I could arrange a cab. Briefly I'd considered hanging on until the Boys returned and hearing the completed album, but a) I was almost out on my feet, having had less than two hours sleep during the preceding forty-eight and b) if Bruce didn't make it back, I rated my chances of getting back in the studio at something less than zero. Also, I was starving and dehydrating at an alarming rate, something the general excitement of the afternoon had very effectively camouflaged. I decided to end the day on a high and on my own terms. Leaving a note at the front desk for Levine, I asked the receptionist for a cab number.

AGD

THE BEACH BOYS - THE ALBUM

You don't need me to tell you that it is five years since the last real Beach Boys album. Much has happened since then; there has been an absolute deluge of unreleased material the quality of which in many cases has been so good it could only have originated from one source. Thus a large amount has been a sheer joy to listen to, an audible paradise surrounding the listener and transporting them to a musical plateau that could only be found by a fan of the Beach Boys.

The most interesting point about the new album was how we came to hear it in the first place. It was before the end of April and CBS had phoned to insist we should hear the album well before its official release. At least it would appear that STOMP is held in reasonable esteem at Soho Square, it's a shame Concerts West couldn't show the same interest

All this when you consider Mick and I had discussed how nice it would be this time around to wait until we had English vinyl to place on the deck. However thanks to a very enthusiastic CBS executive this was not to be.

Apparently it took a long time to decide on a title which surprises me because from a first time listen the title should have been obvious: THE BEACH BOYS - 1985 - they simply sound as they should do, top side of 40, and it's great.

"Getcha Back" thus the first track is, I feel, let down by the title. But the opening bars are magnificent, pure Phil Spector and Beach Boys. I felt Mike's lead wasn't quite right but with more listening it is a very good opener.

"It's Getting Late" is much more electronic but the harmonies still flow around as the overall sound drives around the room.

"Crack At Your Love" so nice to hear Alan, although the title here does seem a little odd.

"Maybe I Don't Know" this one I find is seventies disco in sound although it is slow.

"She Believes In Love Again" the piano lead tells one this is a Bruce track and it is really good, the only guy in the band who comes within the "Vestron" clean cut image.

The second side starts a little odd with "California Callin'" - the intro to this isn't right here, but the chorus is fantastic, classic Beach Boys and the chorus gets better and better. The song is ultimately brilliant.

"Passing Friend" lots of Carl and will become a favourite with many of you, slightly samey to me but still very listenable.

"I'm So Lonely" this is magic for me and I knew it would be before I heard it, still in his room after all these years, great intro and vocal. Thanks Brian for still giving us so much pleasure!

"I Do Love You" I should have known who wrote this, it is awful and is the 'ball and chain' track. It takes the edge off and I have no doubt there was much more suitable material left in the can - time will tell. There is, however, one good thing about it, the track is 4 minutes and 9 seconds long and as I write this there is still time to find something else which would improve the album.

"It's Just A Matter Of Time" is back to the Beach Boys again and is a very nice song to close with.

I mustn't say too much because I don't want to spoil your enjoyment of what is a very acceptable album. It is very significant that the overall sound is 'now' and not 'then' as has been the case since the mid-seventies. The singing and vocals are superb.

Steve Levine is to be congratulated for his efforts, and if respectable sales levels are achieved we might see a second album in less than five years. Even if this record were to be their last it would be said that at least they tried, and for the fans, went out on a high note - album wise.

"TWO TERIAKI AND SOME DEEP-FRIED ICE CREAM, PLEASE..."

The following interview with Bruce could, I now realise, have been a deal better, but in mitigation I offer the following excuses: a) I'm no great shakes with chopsticks; b) in a fit of stupidity I'd only brought one mike and no stand, therefore Bruce had to hold it all the time (which caused him considerable amusement...); c) I'd never interviewed anyone in public before; and d) at the time I wasn't sure if the subject of the new album was open to discussion, given the lack of co-operation evident at the UK end. So, that's why my questioning tended towards the random, and also why I've split the interview into two parts. In this issue I've clumped together all the recent bits; an ensuing issue will pull together the shots I took at Bruce's past, in and out of the Beach Boys. It's called artistic licence...

AD: The new album...

BJ: OK. We're just finishing up our first outside-produced album, right down the block from this restaurant at Westlake Audio, which is where they recorded the THRILLER album by the way. This is our last day with Steve Levine, our English producer, whom I first worked with years ago on CHECKPOINT by Sailor - remember them? I have to say, it wasn't a big album... anyway, the new album, for which we still don't have a title, is a digital recording because we're going to put it out as a CD (compact disc), so it should sound very clean and clear. I think the album is terrific: I love working with Steve. It's out in the States for June, I guess the summer over in England. The first single will be Mike Love and Terry Melcher's "Getcha Back" - in America, anyway - and we'll follow that over here with Alan's "California Calling".

AD: We've been led to believe that the CD and cassette may feature some bonus tracks.

BJ: I would say there'll be one extra track on the CD called "Male Ego". We've recorded "At The Hop", but it's not quite right yet: vocally it's right but the track isn't... the tempo is too fast and we're afraid to put it on the CD, or any place on our album, because we think someone might cover it the way we've done it and have a nice big number one. So ... we'll probably put it on the 25th anniversary album.

AD: How were the songs arrived at? Was it a democratic process or more "c'mon, write a song for the album guys"?

BJ: Well, unfortunately I don't believe in democracy; I think England would be a much stronger country if you got rid of socialism and had a president or a monarch that really ruled. I think Reagan's doing great because he's got a lot of power and it does work over here. Thatcher is probably about 30 years too late to be running England... but to get back to the point, sometimes when you have a band, the talent isn't divided equally. I'm not talking about our band specifically, but if you said that to any member of any band, their egos would be bruised. For example, I don't think I'm even close to Brian Wilson; the talent that I have, to be rationed out throughout my lifetime, Brian has in his little finger. I've learned all about songwriting from him and I'm fortunate enough to be able to slide one of my songs in. I guess we have been fairly democratic in allowing each of the guys to come up with a song, but our record company is using its ears, thank God, to decide what songs are in, because we've recorded a few more than we'll be using.

AD: Speaking of Brian, I guess you realise I feel almost duty bound to ask how he is: also, Dr Landy seems to have a fairly dominant role in the life of both Brian and the band. I read recently that he'd been quoted as saying, "I'm making this album".

BJ: Well... I think Gene Landy is probably a real blessing for Brian Wilson. We, the band, are making the album... but at least Brian isn't 350 pounds and floating face down in some swimming pool. Brian is a very healthy example of if you care enough about somebody, and yourself, you can pull your life back together. We're really proud of Brian, and he sounds great - wait 'til you hear his high voice all over the album.

AD: You mentioned the 25th anniversary album: Mike Love said a year or so back that it could be a sort of 'going-back-over-the-oldies-with-guests' concept. "Good Vibes" with the Jacksons and so on - is that a valid notion?

BJ: The 25th anniversary album will probably be a double and we've been thinking about it. We'll probably have about 20-22 cuts on it, and so you could have sections of old songs, sections of new songs that are duets (NB: I'm not making it up this time - AGD) and sections that might just be new songs. It's a great opportunity and it'll be a lot of fun to do. For example, we cut a track a year or two back, "California Dreaming", which only came out on that crazy album Mike and Dean Torrence did together for Radio Shack. Now what we've been thinking of doing was to shift Alan to the first and third verses and have Julio Iglesias sing, in several languages, the second verse; then toss Brian's falsetto over the top of the record, add a bass part... take the rain off of the front but leave the thunder. Now that's what you think about when you're producing or re-producing a record - but that's all for '86 and '87.

AD: Sticking with Julio, how did "The Air That I Breathe" come to pass?

BJ: Our publicist, Sandy Friedman, was also directing Julio's assault on America, and he just kinda put us together. Julio keeps telling us that he owes us some kind of recording, so we'll probably do the 25th anniversary thing.

AD: More guest appearances recently: are you on "East Meets West"? I can hear Brian, Carl, Mike and Alan, but not Bruce.

BJ: Oh, I'm there alright, but in the background; that was real fun to do. Dennis isn't on it in case you're wondering, even though we finished it about three days before he died. Dennis... we miss Dennis. We were really sad when he drowned - we couldn't believe it... but he had a wonderful life, such incredible charisma. He was a wonderful guy and our band feels that he still lives... in the music because he was the music, he was the guy that convinced Brian and Mike to start the band... we always feel like we have him every night.

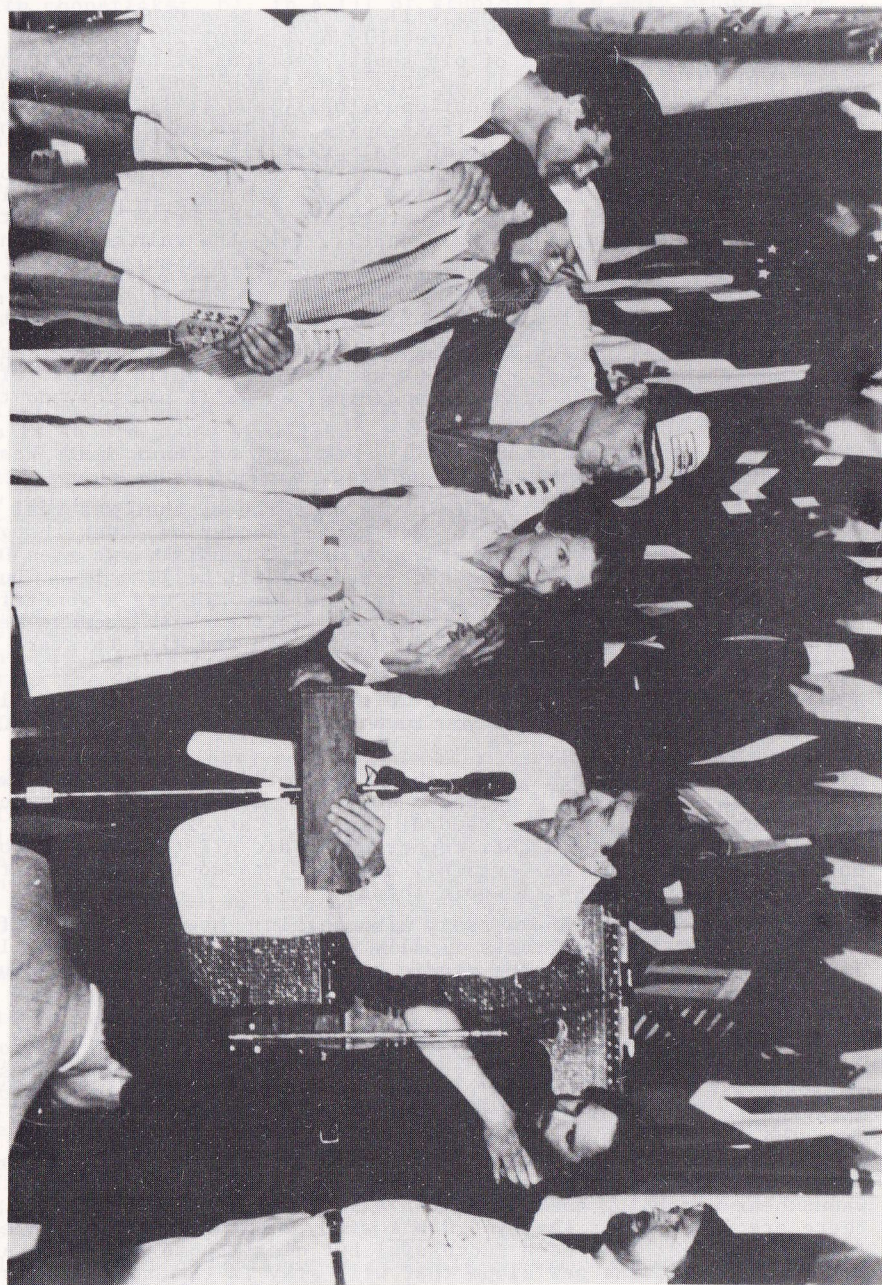
AD: That... rather pre-empts one of my other questions. Um, going back to guesting, is it true you turn up in the David Lee Roth "California Girls" video?

BJ: No, no, even though it was shot three miles from my house; we were so busy that there's no way I could get down to the beach to be in the video. We all love the record! In fact Carl sings the part I sang on the original: he and Christopher Cross did all the backing vocals on David's record, so he certainly owes us a cameo in the video for our first couple of singles, I would think.

AD: Back to the 25th anniversary album again: how about some of the so-called archive tracks finally seeing the light of day? I mean, I'm sure you're aware of the studio bootlegs currently going around (thinks: if not, I'm in big trouble...).

BJ: I have a feeling that those archive tracks, hooked together 20 years later, are going to be about as interesting as seeing 8mm footage instead of Cinemascope. I've got a feeling that the legend makes them more enticing than the reality. I've heard all the bootlegs, and it's unfortunate that you're hearing cassette copies five generations or more down the line. When you bootleg stuff, it's a form of flattery. Bootlegging a record that's out is a different matter, but when you bootleg something that isn't out, it's just because people love you and they wanna hear something that you haven't really decided to release... but there are some things that you don't want to put out. There have been film scenes that have been successful but didn't come out, just as there are more cuts on the new album that will stay in the can, at least for this album.

AD: Whatever happened to the SMILE collage you promised would be on TEN YEARS OF HARMONY in a 1981 Goldmine interview?



"THE BEACH BOYS: AN AMERICAN BAND" is a musical profile of The Beach Boys' 24-year career capturing the excitement of their music, the story of their private lives and the group's impact on American Culture. Pictured: (Left to Right) Bruce Johnston, Al Jardine, Mike Love, First Lady Nancy Reagan, President Ronald Reagan, Carl Wilson, and Brian Wilson.

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BJ: I was worried that I'd upset Brian if I put all those SMILE tapes on it. It's kinda like going to Rembrandt, going through all his sketches - or even watercolours - that we think are as good as oil paintings... but the artist doesn't consider that they're that good. So I just put them away again.

AD: Let's get SMILE out of the way completely now we're at it.

BJ: OK... We could find all the fragments and Brian could put them together, but too much time has passed. I think the legend... it'd be a let down to hear it, I think. It's probably an album that would not have sold, that would have been played and treated like a new classical work. Brian could've been as big as he is a hundred, two hundred years ago, before recordings, just doing music, composing... or he could never have had the Beach Boys and achieved the same success, say, in the '30s, '40s & '50s as a film composer. On a commercial level, SMILE would have certainly been a disappointment, and also to a lot of the fans who might not go too far into serious music. But as a musician, I think you'd be thrilled by it... but again, you have to defer to Brian and his judgement, in order not to upset him. We could put it out, but you don't wanna disrupt his life: if he doesn't want it out, why put it out? Even the bootleg stuff, you're only seeing previews and sometimes... y'know, sometimes when you date, the preview's a lot better than the marriage!

AD: The legendary 7½ minute "Heroes & Villains"?

BJ: Lovely version, but certainly not commercial. I have a copy, but I just have to respect Brian: if he didn't deliver it, then there's no reason why I should play it for anyone... but I have it at home. Are you kidding, I have everything at home! We all have everything. Nothing's been lost.

AD: So maybe one day? BJ: Never, unless Brian calls me up and said "OK".

AD: TEN YEARS OF HARMONY - a representative compilation?

BJ: If we hadn't put it out, I would've made up a tape with all those songs on it. I think it's a lovely collectors album: that should be the RARITIES album. By the way, have you ever noticed anything strange about "With A Little Help From My Friends" on RARITIES?

AD: At the risk of offence, you do sound kinda funny on it.

BJ: I should, I really should. What happened was, we cut the track, did some vocals, took a listen and decided it could use some more high parts, but rather than sing high, we copped out, slowed down the track and sang just a little high; so when we played it back, we took up the tape to the right speed and it sounded OK. But we never made a correct speed master, so Capitol didn't know any different when they put RARITIES out, and I sound like I'm stoned!! Now, there's an exclusive for you...

AD: Why, after 1980, was there such a lack of recording?

BJ: Because the economy in America got so screwy; all the labels started firing people, they got really cautious, radio got cautious and we just decided, well, we don't need to record for a while. We'll repackage some of our earlier things and maybe put out a single eventually, which was "Come Go With Me". It went top twenty, so I guess we were right.

AD: Tell me about the Doris Day project.

BJ: It's interesting: you pointed out to me earlier today that that wonderful publication New Musical Express took a couple of little swipes at it... I think every artist has viability as long as they can perform and have the urge to do it. Doris is retired now, but she's enjoying getting her music back. As opposed to doing old songs. She's enjoying the fact that we - Terry Melcher and I - have discussed the idea of taking the quality she had with her biggest hits and writing new material with that quality of production, arrangement and composition in mind. It's a wonderful project because she's never abused her voice, so she'll sound like she did 20 years ago... It's funny, I was just listening to something on the radio - well, last year actually - that Terry wrote called "Move Over Darling", a big hit for her that seemed to have some viability. If the song really has some health, it gets to go centre-stage again and again; not every year, but maybe every 10-15 years you have another shot if you have the right song.

AD: Did you sing backups on the original?

BJ: No, that was the Blossoms. I had nothing to do with it.

AD: Are you ever going to work with Curt Becher again?

BJ: Now that's funny because I took the bridge from a song I did for him called "Brand New Old Friends" and put it in one of the Doris Day tracks, "Happy Endings", a song we're hoping to get in the Santa Claus movie due out this fall. I never could get anyone to cut "Brand New Old Friends"... I kinda thought that Art Garfunkel or Bette Midler in the '70s, people who really have some legs to their lyrics, would be interested, but I couldn't get anyone to do it, so I finally gave up and sacrificed the song for the sake of the bridge. (NB: "BNOF" was cut for the unreleased California Music album in 1978, lead vocal by Curt, over seven minutes long, harmonies all over the show - a great song!)

AD: The Beach Boys after the 25th anniversary?

BJ: I would think that everyone will certainly want to not tour, will want to retire and will probably take the first date that's offered ... so everyone in our band will tell you that they don't want to do it anymore - and I'm sure you'll find us right out there doing it.

TO BE CONCLUDED.....

AGD

SILVER SURFERS IN A DIGITAL DREAM

It's taken about a week or so, and more changes of mind than I care to think about, but finally I've arrived at a decision regarding THE BEACH BOYS: it is very, very good indeed. Not great, not profound, no digital PET SOUNDS or SUNFLOWER but nonetheless a solidly enjoyable and enjoyably solid album. For the first time in God knows how many years I'm listening to a new Beach Boys album (maybe I should stop here for accuracy) which sports neither of those seemingly staple ingredients, the obligatory duff track and the mouldy oldie from the vaults. Granted, there are tracks I tend to only half-listen to, but nothing as objectionable as, say, "Sumahama".

The reason for my protracted entry? The production, which is so very contemporary that at first, after the initial rush of new product had worn off, I seriously began to wonder if any of it was any good whatsoever; the band seemed lost in the technology, and I wasn't convinced that I really wanted to hear every last nuance of every instrument. The vocals were excellent, but my enjoyment of them was detracted by the tracks, most of which seemed overly obtrusive. So, I kept returning to the two cuts I knew from LA, and eventually put the tape away for a whole day, convinced in my own mind that the band had blown the whole show...

Then, over the May Bank Holiday weekend, the weather smiled on us for once and the tape was aired for selected friends. The response was overwhelmingly positive, so much so that I was forced to reconsider my stance ... and slowly, the pieces fell into place. There may be few future classics, but as commercial product, THE BEACH BOYS seems to be a winner.

The songs are at once individualistic and cohesive, respectively by virtue of composition and production. A cohesive production could be construed as a weakness, i.e. 'they all sound the same'... which they probably would have, had they all been written by the same team. Here, a largely unsung virtue of the Beach Boys (we, the fans, take it for granted; no-one else seems to notice) comes to the fore; the disparity of styles within the band. Carl's clutch comes over, as someone said to me, like his solo material bolstered by true Beach Boys harmony. I could live without "Maybe I Don't Know", veering as it does dangerously close to Toto/Steely Dan territory, but "Where I Belong" ranks with the very best CW material of the '80s, the vocal refrain little short of chilling in its depth and intensity, the track equally effective in its sparseness. "It's Getting Late" rests easily between the two extremes, your competently basic two-mood Carl Wilson thrash.

The "outside" tracks are neither of them intrusive, nor do they number among the set's standouts. "I Do Love You" sounds like a carbon copy of the original Wonder demo, maybe too much for true enjoyment, but Stevie's in grand form on harmonica and Carl's having fun trying to do an SW vocal, so that's OK (and no, I don't know who the other vocalist is; as I type, I've yet to see a sleeve and CBS - to whom many thanks for the advance tape - apparently can't find the right piece of paper whenever I call them. Could happen to anyone...). The George/Hay offering most definitely betrays its origins, and I can't help but feel that a great chance was missed by not having George and Carl either duet or trade vocals here. A pleasant late-night cut, maybe a touch overlong (and could the lyric be a slight backhander at Marilyn? George's pal, that is...)

Now, I'm biased over "She Believes In Love Again" for several reasons (see elsewhere this issue), but I really do think it's rather good, Carl as smooth as ever and Bruce delivering his new raspy tones to great effect. I could say that some nice bits are buried in the mix, but it'd just be my ego slipping...

The first single, Mike & Terry's "Getcha Back" is a definite grower - which for a 45 could be something of a liability, one feels. I'm also of the persuasion, even now, that it's still maybe a layer of vocals shy on the chorus; certainly Brian's entry in the tag perks things up notably. Nonetheless, a good opener and just dense enough without being muddy...

Brian's own clutch of collaborations must of course be the focus of the album for all Wilson Watchers, and I'm willing to bet reactions will be mixed. Having witnessed the genesis of "I'm So Lonely" (on TV) and "It's Just a Matter of Time" (on stage), the final versions come over as satisfying, if not eath-shattering, compositions, easy to sing along to, gentle on the ear. Some may find the sax on "So Lonely" obtrusive, the semi-comic doo-wop of "Matter of Time" less than respectful; to each his own. It's the way Brian wanted, so it's fine by me. "Crack At Your Love" is something of an enigma to these ears: at first I dismissed it as fluff, but there's something pervasive about it that makes me think it's got single potential... or it could just be that Brian's middle-eight suits my own fading tones perfectly. Whatever, the block harmonies carry a power absent for too long - and when did anyone last hear so percussive a keyboard?

Leaving the best for last, again I must confess a certain bias (and I know some consider it contrived, a retrogressive step), but to me, "California Calling" could be a future classic and concert staple. All the ingredients of a solid '60s cut, with '70s vocals and an '80s production: OK, so it mentions sun, surf, cars, waves, girls, in fact just about everything they've ever tried to live down since nineteen-sixtywhenever. So what, as long as the material's strong? A case for instant rewind...

The crunch question: will it sell? Yes, I think so, and possibly rather better than anyone's hoping for. Given a reasonably successful first single - which it could well be - and a little chart momentum, it could be something of a golden summer and fall this year. What better run-up for the silver anniversary?

AGD

THE BEACH BOYS: The Beach Boys

Let me preface this by noting that despite having been enthusiastic enough about the Beach Boys to write a book about them eight years ago, their recent records (with a very few notable exceptions) have been (in a word, and to me personally) unacceptable. When your warm and wonderful team asked if I'd be prepared to put back on my reviewing ears, I was worried that my cynicism (born of being disappointed by former heroes, including, but by no means exclusively, the Beach Boys) might lead a review by me to be as unacceptable as those awful past LPs were. The good news is that it isn't by any means as bad as I at one point feared... the bad news - well, it's not really bad, just a smidgeon on the disappointing side after so long working up to making a new album.

"Getcha Back" is a good starter, if rather predictable - it's in the "East Meets West" style, but slower, and the lead vocal sounds a little on the 'dumb' side, which is maybe a hark back to the glory days. The refrain is actually a total steal from "Alone", a song which was a hit here in 1957 for Petula Clark and was also recorded by the Four Seasons (is that a coincidence or what?), but overall it's OK, and not a bad choice for the first single. "It's Getting Late" features Carl's 'castrato' vocal, like he was auditioning for the Stylistics. There's a nice accapella passage, but the song's not too hot. After that, "Crack At Your Love" (odd title?) seems above average, which it in reality probably isn't. It's a bit "I Can Hear Music"-ish, and one of several potential follow up 45s to "Getcha Back", but not, I'm afraid, a Brian blockbuster, although it is a grower. "Maybe I Don't Know" portrays Carl in good voice on a rather nebulous song. The backing vocals seem too dense, the guitar sound is almost identical to something whose title I can't remember (sound, not tune, mind you), and perhaps this is the right place to say that, as far as the drum sound goes, this LP is 'Dennis's revenge'. I loathe the drum sound, which is intrusive and about as subtle as Arthur Scargill's love for Mrs Thatcher. At this stage, it's two all in my score book...

"She Believes In Love Again" is probably the best song on the record in terms of its all round accessibility. A good performance (by Bruce), a slightly familiar tune (a touch of the "Disney Girls" here and there?), a definite contender for a follow up single, and also very likely to be covered by, say, Art Garfunkel (if he's still pursuing a solo career). As a BB fan who was hooked on the early days, the Chuck Berry riff which launches "California Calling" is just wonderful, although I can hardly deny that the whole song sounds a bit unoriginal if you're familiar with the 20 GOLDEN GREATS era, and the lyrics (mentioning surfing!) don't ring too true. Still, this is how I like the Beach Boys to sound, and even though this would only have been an album track twenty years ago, the relative scarcity of sounds like this makes me love it to death. And no, Virginia, I don't care a jot that they haven't progressed - would you have wanted to hear Buddy Holly progressing? Elvis did, and look what happened to him! Score at this point, four positive, two negative.

"Passing Friend", featuring Boy Carl, sounds like a good idea until you realise that the song seems to have been going on for three years and still hasn't finished. It really is a formula song from the Boy George/Roy Hay catalogue, with a lyric which surely isn't wildly appropriate to the BBs. At a couple of minutes shorter, it might have made more sense, and when I first heard it I thought it was a great idea, but then I realise that I'd had a bath just after it started, and it was still going when I was dry. (Just a joke...) "I'm So Lonely" is the third Brian song, and it's very '50s styled, which means it's most likely meaningless to anyone who has no taste for pre-Beatles pop music. As a pensioner (comparatively), I like it - definitely encouraging for Brian watchers, although patently not a triumph... yet. "Where I Belong" will probably appeal to those who prefer their Beach Boys from the post PET SOUNDS era. It has many of the classic ingredients of Beach Boy output from that period, but it probably isn't really strong enough to be a single. So so, which (for me) is infinitely preferable to "I Do Love You", which is written by (and sounds like) Stevie Wonder. Did we order Stevie Wonder impersonations? If I want to hear Stevie, I play Stevie, not some bastardised copy. It's like Steve Davis being England's centre forward in the next World Cup. Finally, "A Matter Of Time" is a fabulous doo wop ballad, to which the same comments apply as to "It's So Lonely". It's short, but very sweet, and I love it. Brian has obviously not forgotten how to write a classic '50s song, and this is a smiling nod to both the Four Freshmen and the Five Satins.

Final score, six tracks positive, five (to greater or lesser extents) negative, which makes it far better than MIU, LA (LIGHT ALBUM) etc. If only those drums had sounded different (and quieter), this could have been what we were waiting for, and it's the best attempt for nearly a decade. Now I don't mind admitting I wrote the book...

JOHN TOBLER

GIDEA PARK LIVE DATES

These dates are confirmed, and there are another twenty or so gigs currently being negotiated, with dates subject to confirmation.

June	14	Farmer's Tavern	} Nr. Weston-super-Mare
"	15	Brean Leisure Centre	
July	6	Hull, Carnival	
"	6	Hull, Teddy's Club	
"	14	Goldiggers, Chippenham	
August	6	Palm Beach Casino - Cannes	
"	16	Lakenheath U.S. Airforce Base	
"	17	"	
"	25	BIG-TOP Burnham	
September	29	Butlins, Barry Island	
October	4	Palm Beach Casino - Cannes	

NEW RELEASE

Gidea Park's next single is to be "Lazin' on the Beach" and is Scheduled for release on the Mix Factory Record label, during the first week of July.

TAKE A BOW, FOLKS

No news or deep revelations in this section, just a heartfelt thank-you to all the people who made my 1985 American venture not only possible but successful and enjoyable beyond my expectations, they are:

In the UK: Farnham Travel, ATS Repro, Raymond J McCarthy and John Tobler.

There & Back: Trans World Airlines.

Los Angeles: The staff at the Milner Hotel, Wayne at Rockaways, Mark Avnet, Chuck Britz, Jasper & Lynda Daily, Rouben and the people at Malcolm Leo Productions, the staff at Westlake Audio, Van Dyke Parks & family, David Leaf, Stephen W Desper, Chad and Gordon.

Delaware: Gary Zenker, Steve Harvey, the amazing Jeremiah's, Brenda, Anthoula & Foti, the families Smith & Devinnie and everyone at the Great Egg & Beer Hunt (not forgetting the Green Llamas!).

New York: Alan Boyd

Especial thanks to Carl, Alan, Brian & Bruce for a memorable afternoon and evening, notably the latter for not hanging up on me the first time I called and for being my "backstage pass" to the control room - I'll never say another word against you, BJ. Thanks also to Mike Love for not being present...

Finally, God bless to four very special people; Ricky, Andrea and Kelly -Lynne, for reasons which have almost nothing to do with the Beach Boys; and Brian once more, for reasons which have almost everything to do with the Beach Boys, and even more to do with Brian Douglas Wilson.

AGD



THE BEACH BOYS - AN AMERICAN BAND

I've got to come right out and confess that any comments I might make concerning the long-awaited video biography must inevitably be coloured by the conditions under which I first saw it, on a 36" screen with super-crisp stereo sound, alone, in a darkened room in Malcolm Leo's offices just off Sunset; in short, perfect circumstances.

This being so, it seems churlish in the extreme to voice any complaint... but they were few, and it's partly my nature anyway. For the most part, the video was a feast for the eyes and - surprisingly - the ears as well. I say surprisingly because I'd somewhat sweepingly assumed that, aside from the few new live songs, I'd be familiar with the music to the point of near-contempt... and whilst it was true that the songs themselves were old friends, the quality of the presentation excelled. The previous day at Western Studio, I'd learned how, during the making of the video, all the old masters had been unearthed, dusted off and generally rejuvenated. The songs have never sounded crisper, and for long-time fans, there's a special bonus in that the PET SOUNDS selections are all presented in true stereo! From heaven only knows where, the original four and eight-track tapes had been disinterred and mixed down for proper stereo and, slight drop-outs aside, it was a fascinating experience to hear what might have been (and perhaps could still be, for now we know it can be done...)

I could easily embark on a tedious narrative of all the highlights, tedious only because it would encompass just about the whole movie, so I'll confine myself to the highest of the highs: "Fire", complete with the original promo later used for "Good Vibrations"; a live "In My Room" from the early sixties TV shows; Brian's solo "Surf's Up", everything we'd imagined; candid studio and 'playtime' footage from the late sixties; the somewhat grainy 1967 Hawaii material; and much more, all now lost in the overall impression of a surfeit of riches.

The narrative of the video is handled by each band member in turn with newly shot footage of Alan, Bruce, Carl and Mike. For obvious reasons, Dennis's links were from earlier interviews; less easy to understand was why Brian's observation were taken from the 1976 NBC-TV special (or rather were outtakes from same), when he was grossly overweight and disinclined to get out of bed. Only at the very end do we see the 'new' Brian of 1983/4.

The focus of the entire movie is naturally Brian, but easily occupying the second billing slot is Dennis, and the tribute sequence - to the music of "Forever", of course - is both sensitively handled and hugely affecting, the more so as it follows two versions of "You Are So Beautiful". Once, from 1976, is perfect; the second dates from Dennis's last performance at the July 4th Atlantic City show, and is frankly almost unwatchable and unlistenable. The disintegration of the man is by then all but complete...

Complaints corner: between 1970 and 1976, there's absolutely no footage and previous little reference to three of the bands very best albums. We're told the footage has been either lost or destroyed; maybe so, but some stills would have been better than nothing... Other gripes are very minor, e.g. during at least two songs the visual and soundtrack don't match, and the "Sloop John B" promo has been dissected and dealt out at random during the PET SOUNDS segment.

The essence of video is that it is visual, and no amount of verbiage from me - or anyone else - can do "The Beach Boys - An American Band" justice; it has to be seen and no Beach Boys fan worthy of the designation should miss any opportunity to grab an eyeful.

AGD

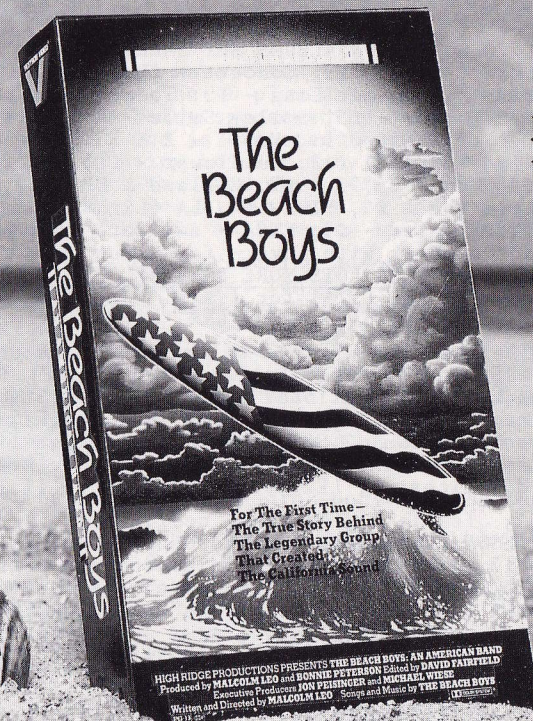


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News

It is, as they say, all happening: by the time you read this, the album and single will have been released in the UK (and the home video imminent) whilst in the US the album will hopefully be following the single up the charts. Released at roughly the same time as the video, "Getcha Back"/"Male Ego" entered the Billboard Hot 100 at no. 51 with a bullet, easily beating the Boys' previous highest initial entry of 61 by "Heroes & Villains". Billboard gave the 45 a positive review, and the promo video - directed by Dom Orlando and produced by Chris Mather for Pendulum Productions - is currently receiving heavy play on MTV. The single has also debuted at 27 in the Adult Contemporary chart: as for the 12" single - there isn't one, contrary to earlier rumours, so "Male Ego" will only appear on the 7" 'B' side and the CD. For those who worry about these things, the UK release dates and catalogue numbers are: Single, June 3rd - CRBA 6324; album, June 10th - CRB 26378. Steve Levine is credited as the sole producer. The second 45 in the US is scheduled to be "California Calling"/"She Believes In Love Again".

To push the album, the band have taken to the road until September, having begun in Phoenix May 3rd. The 40 plus date tour - eight of them baseball double headers - is being sponsored by Jeep Corporation under the banner "Jeepin' Safari" and is expected to pull in excess of one million punters. This isn't counting however many turn up for the annual July 4th Washington Mall bash that the band were still doing last we heard. As for the UK, no concrete plans yet... but then we don't know what Bruce told AGD in Los Angeles to make him smile every time someone says "October"...

In the meantime, Brian's been branching out on his own of late. The pic of The Man with Jackson Brown last ish was taken March 10th this year at the Palace Theatre, LA, during a benefit for the homeless of the city, at which bash Brian performed "Da Doo Ron Ron", "California Girls" and "Sloop John B". More recently (May 12th), Bri went solo again, this time at a benefit for a Malibu emergency centre: as well as the three numbers noted above, Brian also delivered "Male Ego" and "I'm So Lonely" and during "Sloop" was joined by John Stewart and Stephen Stills. The performances were fine and Bri was in great good humour, he'd also shaved off his beard (thanks Dave).

On May 31st, Vestron and Capital Radio sponsored the charity presentation of "The Beach Boys: An American Band" in aid of Help A London Child. As this is being tapped out before the event, we can't say if it is any different to the home video version, but AGD informs that the home video is not quite the same as the one he saw in LA and describes elsewhere in the mag thus: "Sloop John B" is now live, "Time To Get Alone" is now a rough mix and "Friends" has been dropped altogether. There are also new sub-titles, making it easier for the less-than-terminal fans to figure out the chronology. Official UK release date for the video is June 13th.

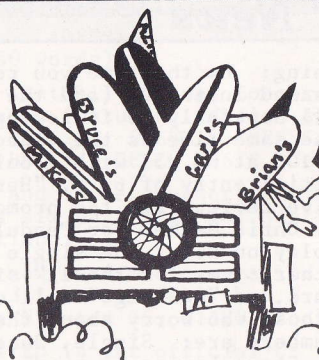
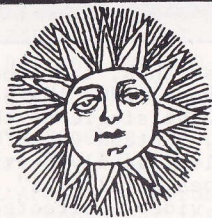
In the grand tradition of all things Wilson-related, David Leaf's update of his seminal BW biography has been re-scheduled for September/October, in order for the effects of the new album to be gauged and noted. We can wait, we know it will be worth it.

Looking slightly backwards, mention should be made of the fact that the Julio/BB 45 briefly mentioned the last time round is a substantially different mix to the album track, the Beach Boys being much more in evidence. In fact the pic sleeve gives the boys prime vocal billing.

And that's all for now: we are waiting on your album and video views and reviews....

MIKE & AGD





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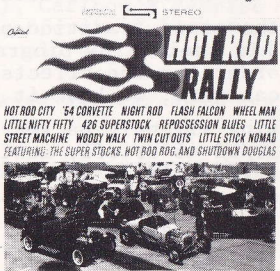
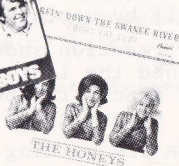
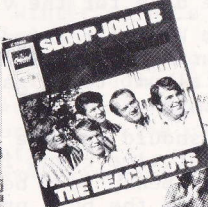


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1. SMILE-2nd Edition. Side A- Good Vibrations, Barnyard, Do you like worms, Old Master Painter/You are my Sunshine, Can't wait too long, Tones, Cabinessence. Side B- Bicycle Rider, Heroes & Villains, Our Prayer, Wonderful, Vega-tables, Wind Chimes, Mrs. O'Leary's Cow, I love to say Da Da, Child is Father to the Man, Surf's Up.
2. BEACH BOYS-LIVE 1971. Side A- With the Grateful Dead, Fillmore East 27-4-71, Searchin', Riot in Cell block No.9, Good Vibrations, I Get Around, Help Me Rhonda, Okie from Muskogee, Johnny B. Goode. Side B- Princeton University November 1971, Dont go near the water, Darlin, Wouldnt it be nice, Long Promised Road, Disney Girls, Take a load off your feet, Sloop John B., Surfin'USA.
3. GOTTA GROOVE. Side A- Good Timin'(Track only), We Gotta Groove, Calendar Girl, Santa Ana Winds(Alternate), Lookin'Down the Coast/Monterey, Lady Lynda(Alternate) Little Girl, Angel come home(Track only), Shortenin'Bread(Track only). Side B Good Timin'(No backing vocals), Skatetown USA, Brian's Back(Unfinished Group Version), Be My Baby, Hey There Momma, Stevie, California Feelin', Runaway(Great quality live 1982 version)
4. DENNIS WILSON- Sweet Inspiration. Side A- Moonlight, It's not too late, Companion, School Girl, Wild Situation, He's a Bum, He's a Bum(Track only) Wild Situation(Track only). Side B- Carry Me Home, River Song(Early BB Version), New Orleans(Track only), Love Surrounds Me(Track only), Baby Blue(Early Version), Pacific Ocean Blues(Track only), Barbara(Live).
5. SESSIONS, REHEARSALS/MIKE LOVE OUT-TAKES. Side A- Please let me Wonder, Do you Wanna Dance, Here comes the Night(1967 Version), 1976 TV Special Rehearsal-Surfer Girl, Im Bugged at my old Man, Side B- California Beach, Be my Baby(Alt.) Endless Summer Beach Band, 10,000 Years ago(Track only), Oh Those Girls, Teach me Tonight(Unfinished), Looking back with Love(Tags).
6. BRIAN WILSON DEMO'S. Side A- That Special Feelin', It's Over Now(Rehearsal), It's Over Now, They're Marching Along, Im Beggin'you please, Still I Dream of it, Love is a Woman, Mona, Airplane. Side B- Let's put our hearts together, I'll Bet He's nice, Walls, Awake, Lazy Lizzie, Brian on Phone to Australia.
7. HONEY'S, GINGER and AMERICAN SPRING. Side A- Three Surfer boys, Once you've got Him, Little Dirt Bike, For always & ever, Darlin'Im not steppin out on you, When I think about you, Love me the way that I Love you, Truly, Seven days in September Growing up is hard to do, It's like Heaven(with Rocky). Side B- Just like Romeo & Juliet, Im out to get him, Slip on Through, Sweet Sunday Kinda Love, Do Ya?, It's like Heaven, Don't be Cruel, California Feelin'.
8. LIVE AT UNIVERSAL 19 NOVEMBER 1983. Side A- California Girls, Sloop John B, Darlin', Dance, Dance, Dance, Wouldnt it be nice, You're so good to me, Warmth of the Sun, Imagine, God Only Knows, The Boogie's in Town, Runaway, 409, Shut down, Little old Lady from Pasadena, I Get Around.Side B- It's just a matter of time, Come go with me, Be true to your School, Disney Girls, Heaven, Surfer Girl, Rockin' all over the World, Help me Rhonda, Rock n'Roll Music, Surfin'Safari, Surf City, Surfin'USA, Good Vibrations, Barbara Ann.
9. ODDS & ENDS & MEDLEYS. Side A- Their Hearts were full of Spring(1985 Version), With a Little help from my Friends(Different Mix), My Solution, We're Together Again, Marcella(Different Mix), Mr. Moto Live in Oxnard 1962, Surfer Girl with Julio Iglesias & Back in the USSR with Ringo Starr both from July 4th Washington 1984. Side B- Unreleased Medley No.2 Little Deuce Coupe/Little Honda/Dance, Dance, Dance/When I Grow up/Be true to your School/Do you Wanna Dance? Rock n' Roll Music(Longer different mix), Here comes the Night Medley, HCTN/California Girls/Wouldnt it be nice/Do it Again/Your'e so good to me/I Can Hear Music/Wendy/Help Me Rhonda/HCTN(Reprise).
10. THE BEACH BOYS AN AMERICAN BAND-SOUNDTRACK. Side A- Surfer Girl, Surfin'USA, Their Hearts were full of Spring, California Girls, In my Room, Dance, Dance, Dance, Here Today, Wouldnt it be nice, That's not me, Sloop John B, God Only Knows, Good Vibrations. Side B- Surf's Up, Bicycle Rider, Fire, I Just wasnt made for these times, Do it Again, Time to get alone, Rock n' Roll Woman, I Can hear Music, Breakaway, Forever, Rock n' Roll Music, Surfer Girl, Barbara Ann, Fun, Fun, Fun, It's Just a matter of time. Excerpts from different mixes and Live songs. It's Great.
11. BRIAN WILSON- Interviews for Earth News February 1977. Brian talks about the group from the early days up until The Beach Boys Love You Album.
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- 6.Fridays 1980 - KTSA,Good Vibrations,Goin'On
- 7.American Bandstand 1979 & 1980
- 8.Saturday Night Live with Brian 1976 Back Home,Love is a Woman
- 9.Mike Douglas Show with Celebration 1978 Almost Summer,Fun,Fun,Fun
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- 5.Beach Boys Medley from Dick Clark's 30th Anniversary Special 1981
- 6.Portrait of a Legend 1983
- 7.California Sound from Germany 1982
- 8.Beach Boys Dutch TV (Miming) Black & White 1969
- 9.Count Down Dutch TV Mike Love Interview & Good Timin' Film 1979
- 10.Very Best OF TV Advert 1983
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- 12.Carl Wilson 'Hold Me' & Interview with Tom Snyder 1981

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